

# **Being an Effective Policy Advocate for Children and Families**



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# Our Workshop Goals

- **Reviewing keys to effective public advocacy for low-income and at-risk families**
- **Identifying clear policy goals**
- **Targeting and timing advocacy efforts**
- **Using data and personal stories to make your case and craft an effective message**
- **“Advocacy 101” tips: communication, relationship building, and strategy**

# What is Advocacy?

*The act or process of  
... supporting a cause  
or proposal.*

~www.merriam-webster.com

# Who are Advocates?

- Businesses
- Non-profit organizations
- Lobbyists
- Researchers/academics
- Anyone who has an interest in public policy
- Voters/constituents
- YOU

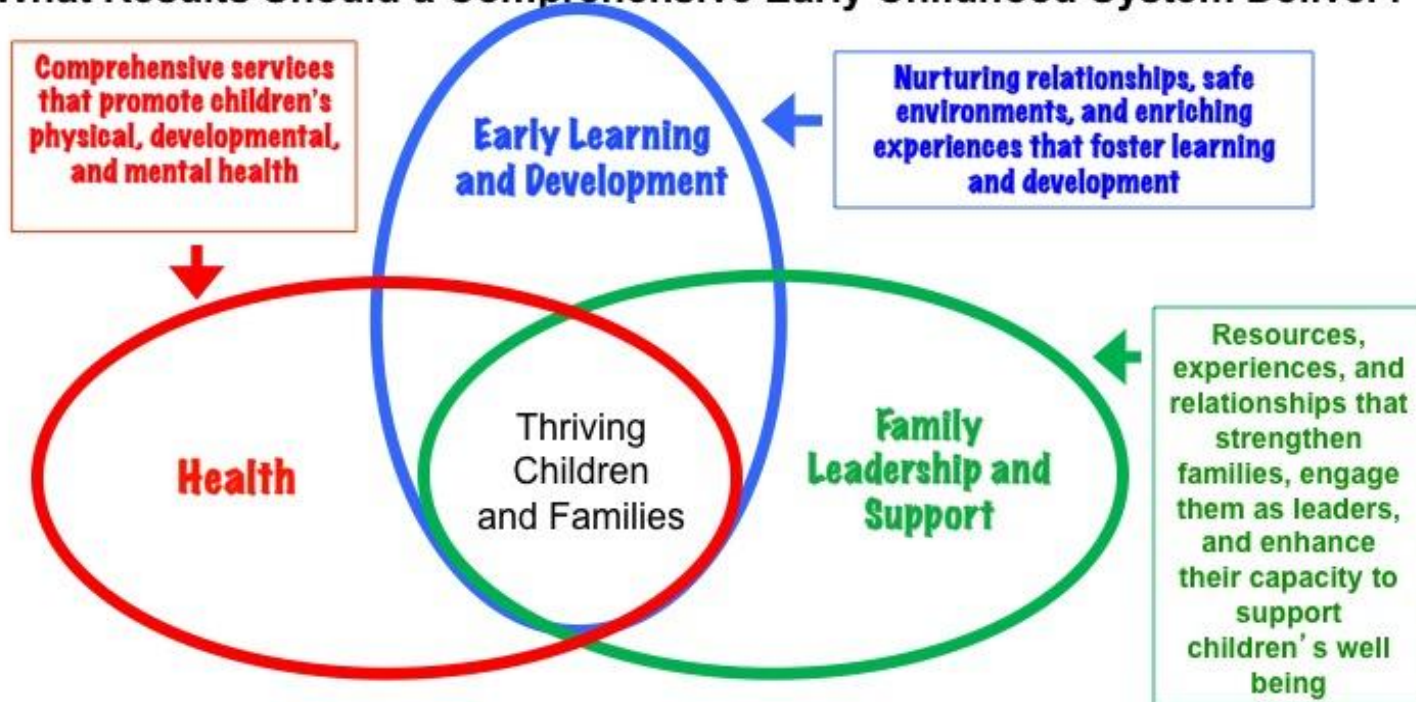
# Establishing Policy Goals

# Young Children Need...

- Strong families with adequate income, time, flexibility, parenting information and support
- Access to health care (screening, medical home, health insurance)
- Quality early learning experiences
- Healthy and supportive communities

# System of Services for Young Children

What Results Should a Comprehensive Early Childhood System Deliver?



- Values and Principles** Optimally, a comprehensive early childhood system will:
- Reach all children and families, and as early as possible, with needed services and supports
  - Genuinely include and effectively accommodate children with special needs
  - Reflect and respect the strengths, needs, values, languages, cultures and communities of children and families
  - Ensure stability and continuity of services along a continuum from prenatal into school entry and beyond
  - Ease access for families and transitions for children
  - Value parents as decision makers and leaders
  - Catalyze and maximize investment and foster innovation

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Source: Early Childhood Systems Working Group.

# The WHAT: Your Policy Goals

- **What** do children and families need to be healthy?
- **What** policies and budget items shape and effect your work?
- **What** opportunities exist to strengthen or expand existing policies and funding streams?
- **What** works? Take an asset based approach.
- **What** have other states/communities done?



# Targeting and Timing Your Advocacy Strategies

# Consider the Context

- **WHO:** What are the potential alliances, and who are the potential champions?
- **WHEN:** What opportunities are presented by current events, timing, etc.?
- **HOW:** What are the political realities? What strategies will be most effective to influence your target population.

# WHO?

- **Who makes the policy and public spending decisions?**
  - Legislators (and staff!)
  - Legislative committees
  - Administrators
- **Who influences the policy decisions**
  - Business and community leaders
  - Voters
  - Media
- **Who are your allies?**
  - Coalitions and other groups
  - Champions

# WHEN?

- Take into consideration legislative timelines.
  - For legislation, where are you in the session?
  - Are committees hearing bills? This is a chance to talk about your issue.
  - Is it budget season? What phase of the budget are you in? Late winter and early spring are key advocacy points.
- Federal initiatives are generally on a slower and less predictable timetable.
- If there's a hook, use it to raise visibility.

# WHEN (cont.)

- **Two year legislative sessions in MA**
  - **We're reaching the end of 2011-2012. Legislation for new session will be filed in late fall – with some new legislators!**
- **Committee process**
- **Floor process**
- **Both General Court (House) and Senate**
- **Conference**
- **Governor**

# Timing is Everything

- Almost all public policy is set through legislation, administrative regulations, or through the state or federal budget process.
- Know when those trains are moving – get the schedule and check in at every stop!
- Once the train has left the station, you still have multiple opportunities to get on board and change its direction.

# Finding and Using Data to Make Your Case

# Key Questions

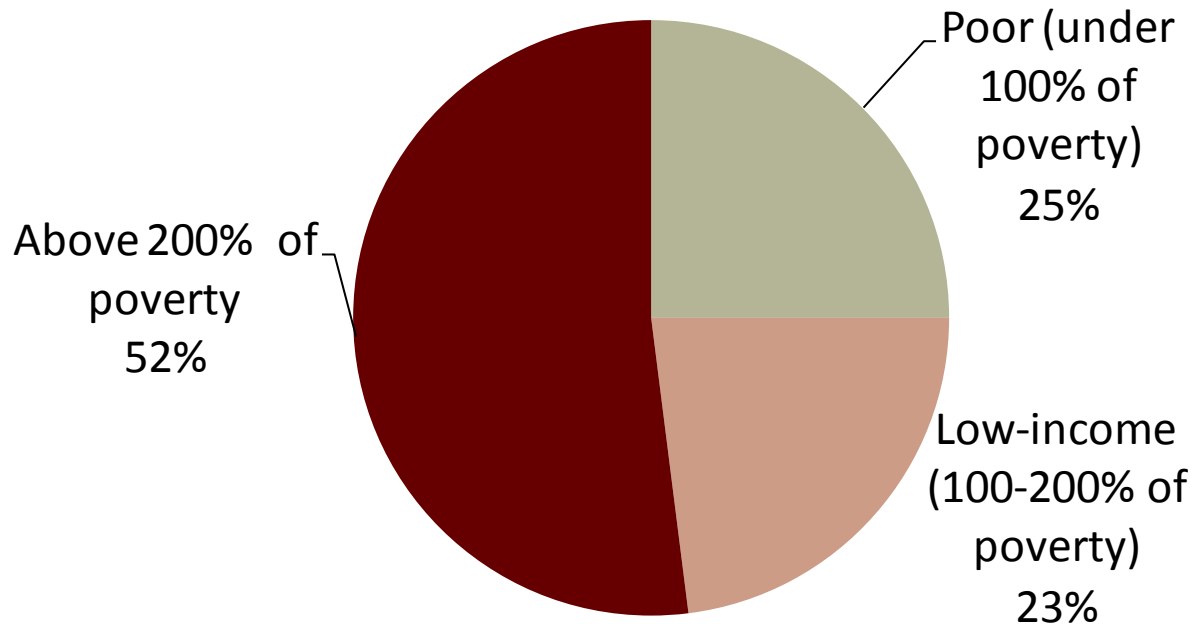
- Who are the people in your state/community?
- What do they need to be healthy and thrive?
- How can data paint a picture of well-being in your state?
- How and where are individuals getting services?





# Many Young Children Are Poor or Low-Income...

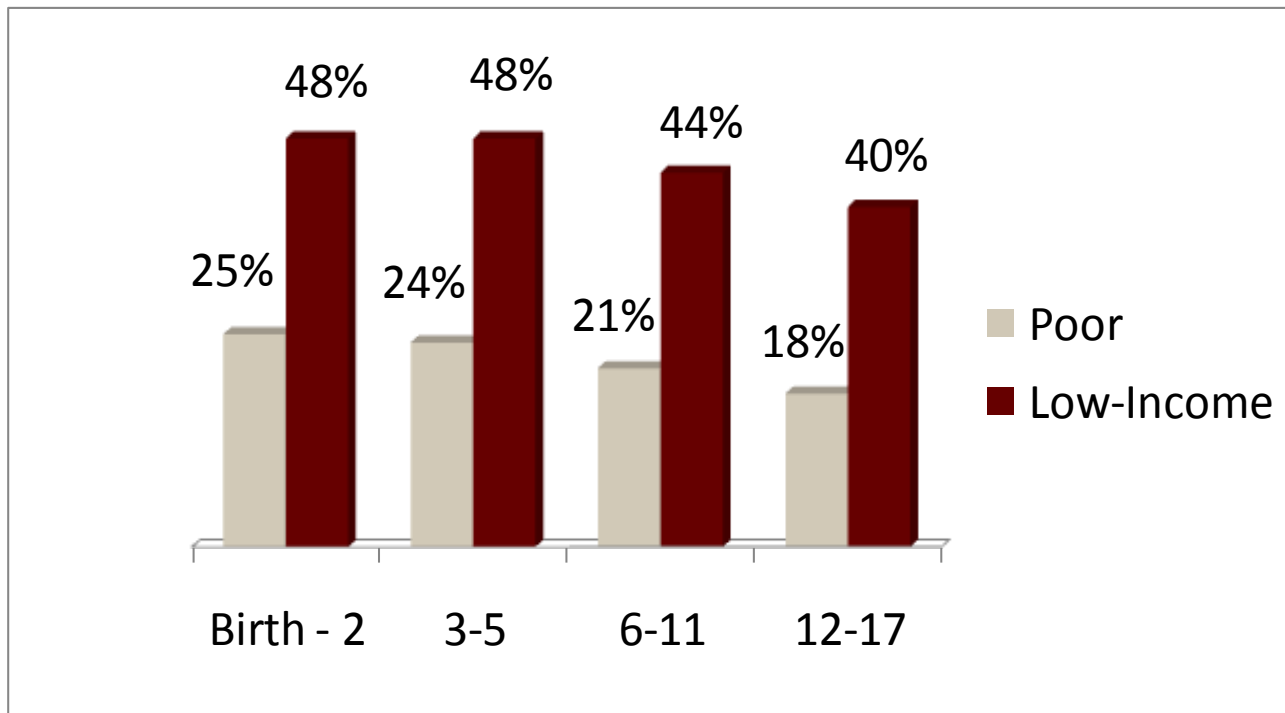
Children Under Age 6 by Family Income, 2010



Source: National Center for Children in Poverty.

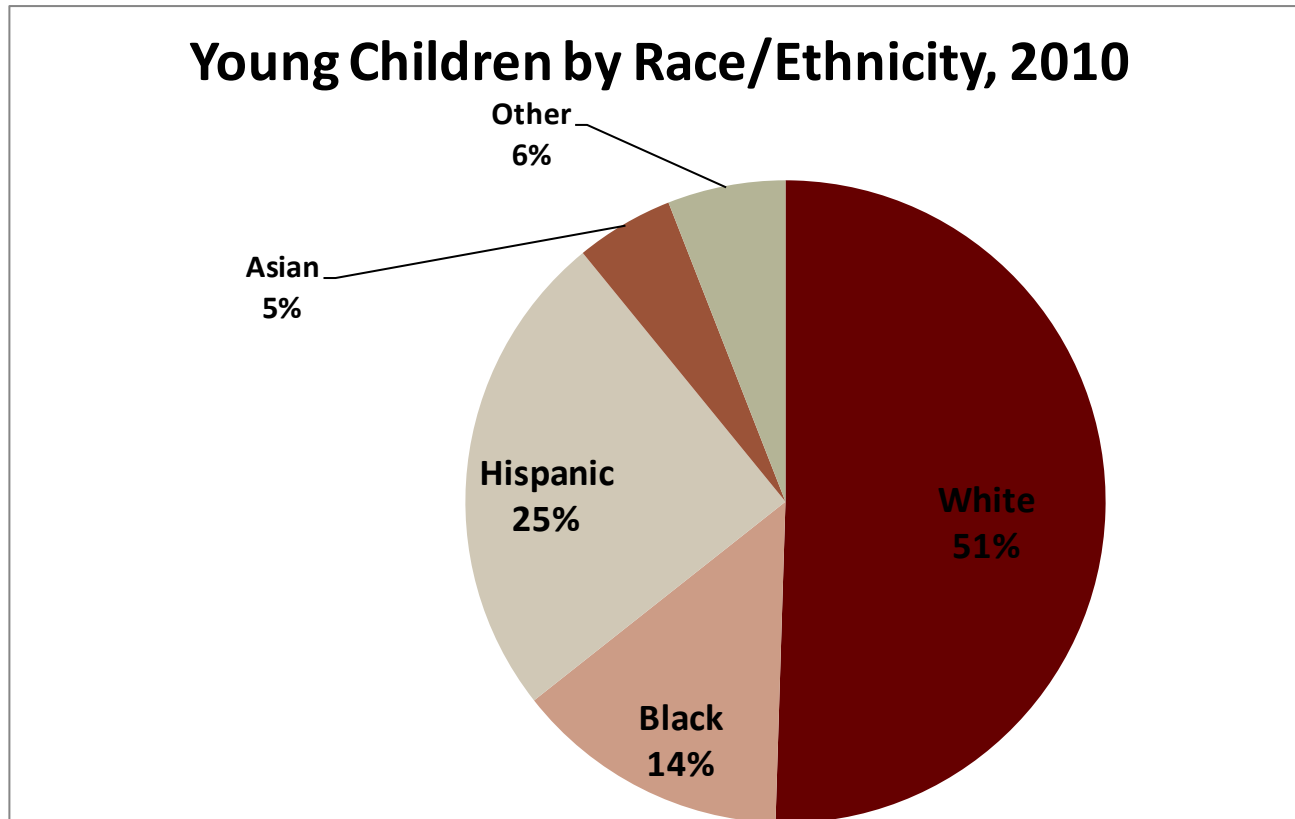
# ...And the Youngest Children Are Most Likely to be Poor

## Children Living in Low-income and Poor Families in the U.S. by Age Group, 2009



Source: National Center for Children in Poverty.

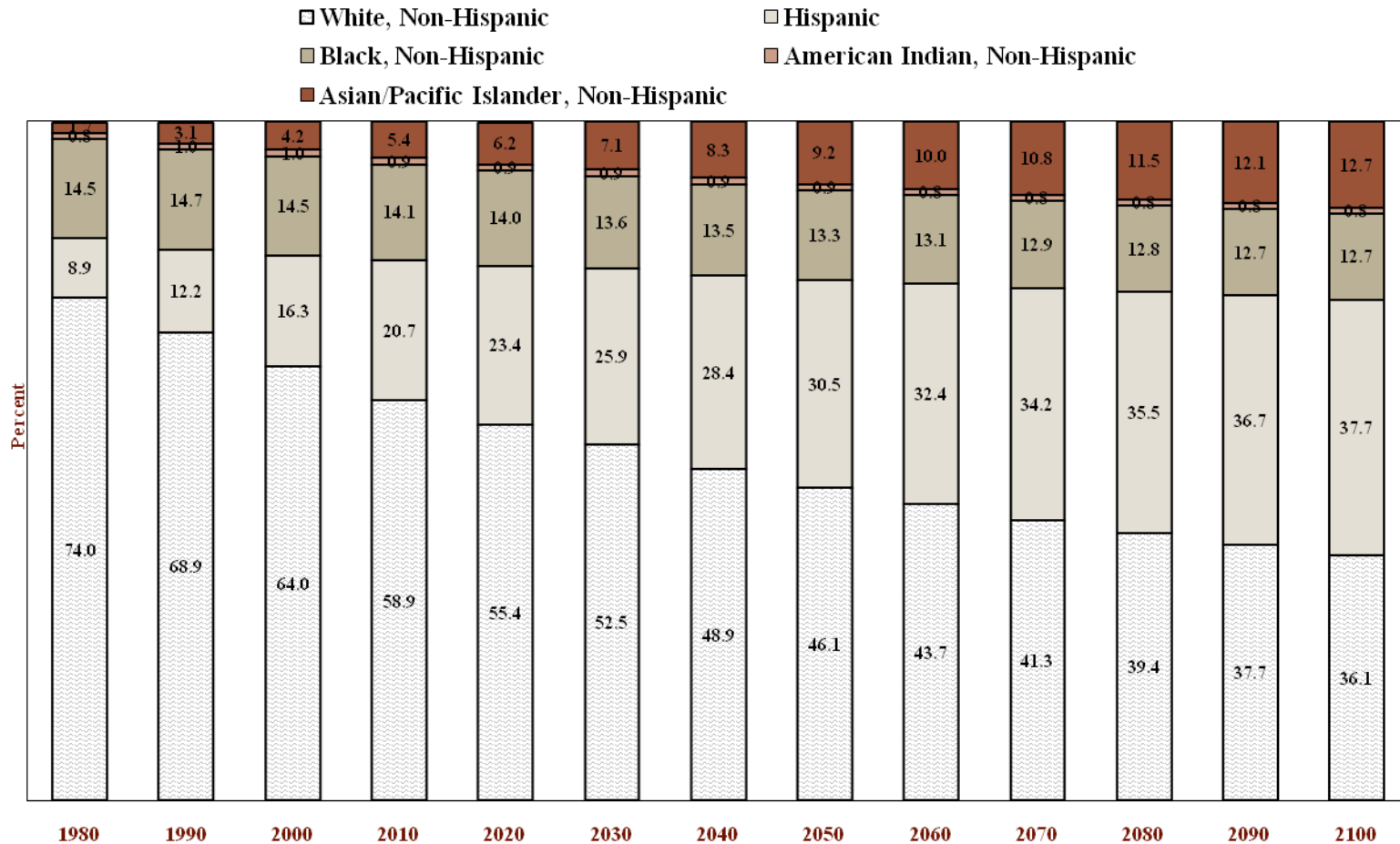
# Young Children Are Racially/Ethnically Diverse...



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: National Center for Children in Poverty

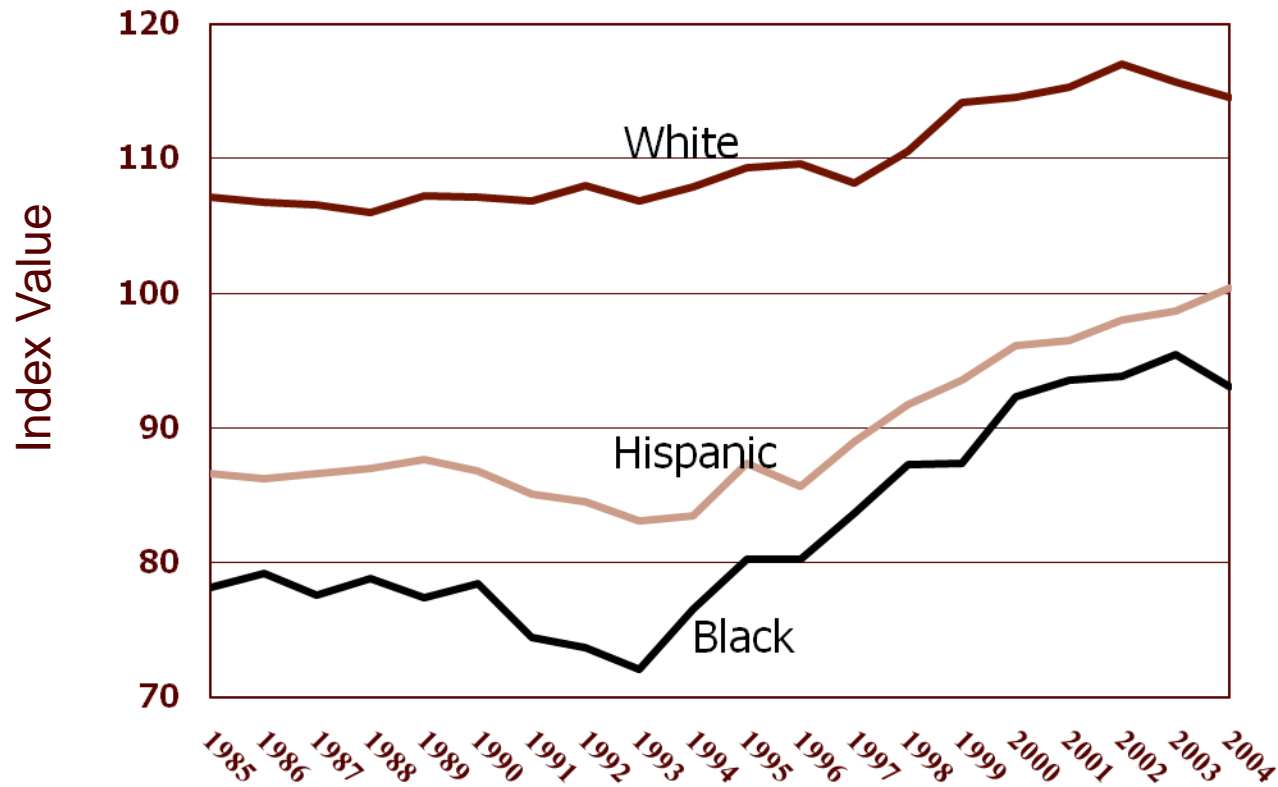
# ...And Children of Color Are an Emerging Majority



Source: Donald Hernandez, Center for Social & Demographic Analysis, from Population Projections Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Issued January 13, 2000.

# Racial/Ethnic Disparities Endure Over Time

## FCD Child Well-being Index (CWI)



Source: "Measuring Social Disparities" (2008) by Donald J. Hernandez and Suzanne Macartney; University at Albany, SUNY.

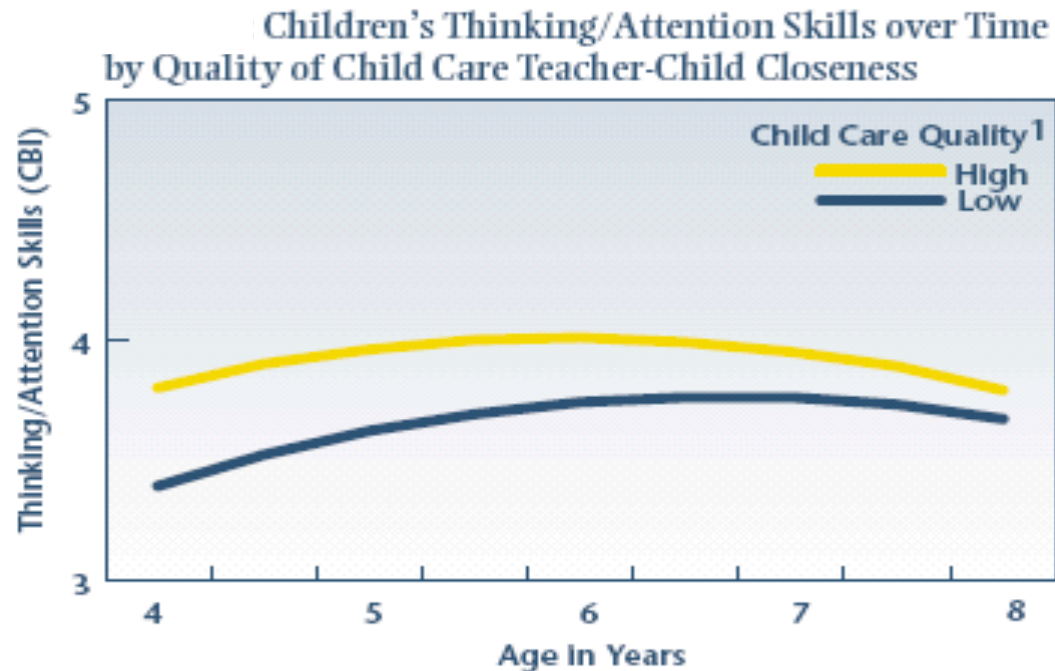
# Federal Programs Serve a Fraction of Eligible Children

- Head Start serves 40 percent of eligible preschoolers and about 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers in Early Head Start.
- Child care subsidies serve 17 percent of eligible children.



Source: HS analysis by NWLC; CCDBG analysis by HHS.

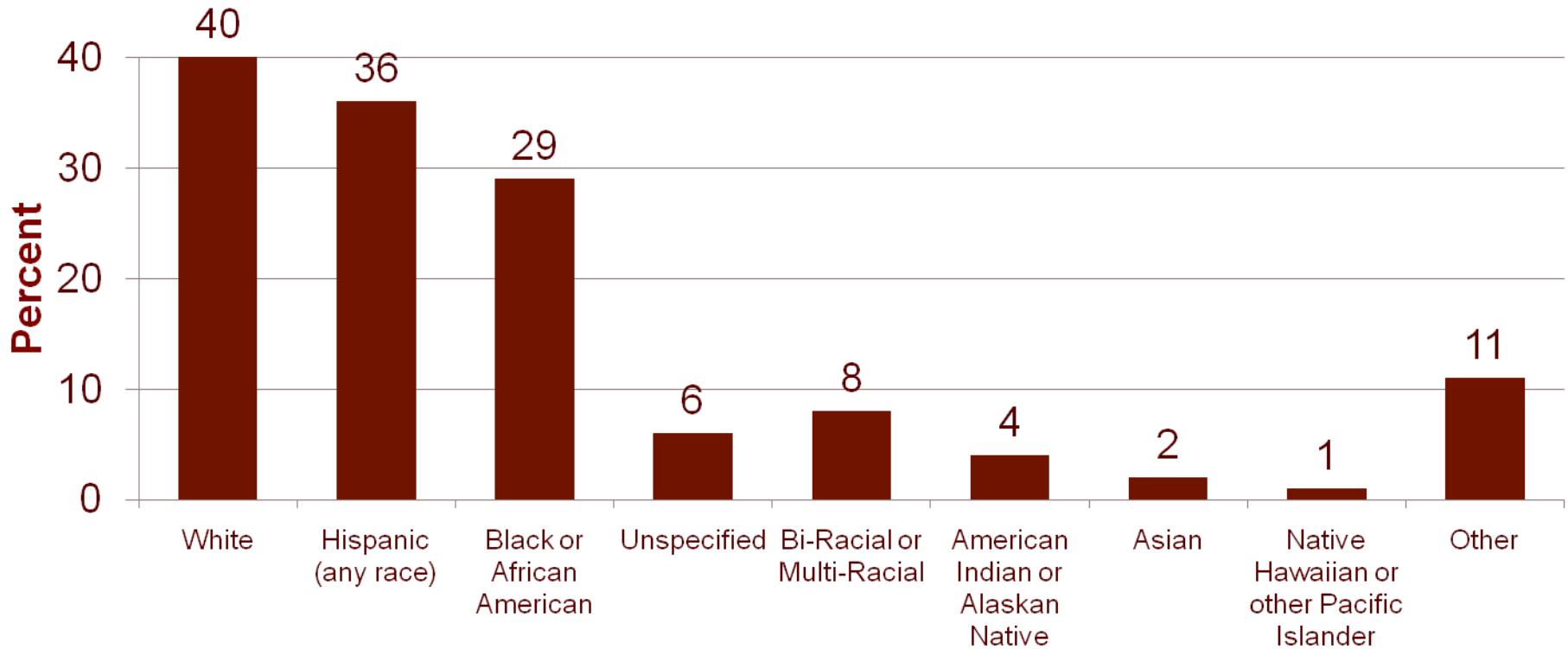
# Children Can Benefit from Quality Child Care...



<sup>1</sup>Note: High=75th percentile of closeness ratings;  
Low=25th percentile of closeness ratings

Source: Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S. L., Yazejian, N., Byler, P., Rustici, J., & Zelazo, J. The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school: Executive summary. 1999.

# Children in Head Start, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: CLASP calculations, 2010 PIR data.

Note: Hispanics may identify as any race, so percentages do not add to 100%.



# Families Need to be Food Secure

- In December 2011, SNAP participation was the highest level ever (46.5 million children and adults).
  - 1 in 7 people in U.S. receive SNAP.
  - 7 in 10 people eligible for SNAP receive benefits.
- Nearly half (47 percent) of SNAP recipients are children.
  - 1 in 4 children in U.S. receive SNAP.

Source: USDA and Food Research Action Center (FRAC).

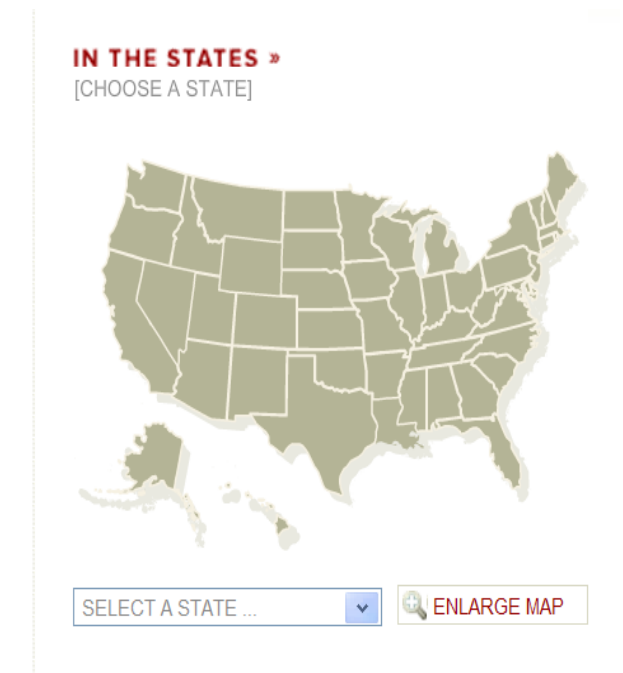
# CLASP DataFinder

- [www.clasp.org/data](http://www.clasp.org/data)
  - Poverty
  - Young Child Demographics
    - Race, ethnicity, immigrant family status
  - Child Care spending/participation
  - Head Start/Early Head Start participation
  - TANF spending



# CLASP In the States

- [www.clasp.org/in\\_the\\_states/](http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states/)
- Find fact sheets on:
  - Head Start
  - Child Care assistance
  - TANF spending
  - Infant/toddler initiatives



# Additional Resources

- **NCCP: Demographics Wizard**, create custom tables of national- and state-level statistics about low-income or poor children under the age of six. [www.nccp.org/tools/demographics/](http://www.nccp.org/tools/demographics/)
- **NCCP: Improving the Odds for Young Children** provides state-specific, regional, and national profiles that integrate data about an array of policies that affect early childhood development. [www.nccp.org/profiles/early\\_childhood.html](http://www.nccp.org/profiles/early_childhood.html)
- **Children in Newcomer and Native Families** presents a large number of indicators reflecting the characteristics of children from birth through age 17 in immigrant families by country or region of origin and in native-born families by race-ethnicity. [http://mumford.albany.edu/children/data\\_list\\_open.htm](http://mumford.albany.edu/children/data_list_open.htm)
- **FRAC's Federal Food Programs State Profiles** include information on state demographics, poverty, food insecurity, participation in federal nutrition programs, and state economic security policies. [www.frac.org/html/federal\\_food\\_programs/federal\\_index.html](http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/federal_index.html).
- **NCSL State Early Care and Education Legislative Database** provides information on all proposed and enacted legislation covering early care and education including child care, prekindergarten, family support. [www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/ECELD.cfm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/ECELD.cfm)

# Census Data

- American FactFinder:  
<http://factfinder2.census.gov/main.html>
- Mapping:  
<http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/>
- State and County Quickfacts:  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>
- Population Projections:  
<http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/>

# Using Personal Stories to Make Your Case

# The Faces Behind the Policies

- Give examples of experiences in your community.
- Translate the unmet needs and gaps in services into faces and families.
- Talk about success - how state and federal programs **do** help individuals connect to needed resources.
- Get individuals involved. Hearing personal stories first hand is powerful.



# Overcoming Barriers

- Organize advocacy days or groups to attend hearings, and help with transportation, etc.
- Collect stories in writing, via video, or in other creative ways.
- Offer individuals moral support and help them prepare for speaking to policy makers.
- Work with media to include profiles of individuals in their coverage of issues.
- Use social media to generate calls and emails sharing stories.



# Ways to share stories

- Communicate, communicate, communicate
  - Letters
  - Phone calls
  - Emails
  - On-line campaigns
  - In person visits (in their offices, your organization, or events)
- Use data to present the big picture, and stories to fill in the details.

# When sharing stories

- Briefly share your experience and why this issue is important to you.
- Be very specific about what you want them to do:
  - File or co-sponsor a piece of legislation
  - Support a budget item
  - Vote for a bill or a budget amendment
  - Speak to a colleague or at a hearing
  - Make a regulatory change

# Tips for Advocates

# Advocacy 101 Tips

- Collect stories and experiences and use them – nothing is more powerful than personal stories from voters.
- Keep on top of things through newsletters, personal relationships, and joining campaigns
- Relationships, relationships, relationships!
- Be prepared.

# 101 Tips (cont.)

- Take a long view. Even if your issues aren't moving, building relationships & making the case now will put you in a position to have an impact over time.
- Know what you want, and be specific.
- Be available to answer any questions, and be willing to track down more information.
- Always end with an ask...and follow-up.
- Always, always, always say thank you!

# Contact Information

➤ Contact us:

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➤ Visit us at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org)

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